

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JOSEPH KRAFT COLUMN, THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1974, WASHPOST, HEADED "MOSCOW'S DILEMMA IN DEALING WITH IRAQ".

2. BAGHDAD. THE BEST PLACE TO ASSESS MOSCOWS GAME IN THE MIDEAST IS HERE IN THE CITY OF ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS. FOR NO COUNTRY IN THIS AREA IS MORE BOUND TO RUSSIA BY POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC TIES THAN IRAQ.

3. BUT EVEN THE RADICAL REGIME HERE IS BEING PUSHED TOWARD THE WEST BY THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. SO, IF ONLY TO LEGITIMIZE THEIR PRESENCE IN THE MIDEAST, THE RUSSIANS ARE TENTATIVELY MOVING TO COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED STATES IN ARRANGING A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARABS.

4. IRAQ IS CURRENTLY RULED BY A GOVERNMENT OF THE BAATH
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PARTY WHICH IS PROBABLY THE MOST NATIONALISTIC AND

RADICAL REGIME ANYWHERE IN THE ARAB WORLD. ON SUCH ISSUES AS COMPROMISE WITH ISRAEL AND NATIONALIZING OIL HOLDINGS, THE LOCAL STRONGMAN, VICE PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN, IS THE HARDEST OF HARDLINERS. AS A RESULT, IRAQ HAS BEEN AT

ODDS WITH ALL STATES IN THE AREA INCLUDING EGYPT, SAUDI

ARABIA, SYRIA AND MOST NOTABLY, IRAN.

5. IRAN IS ALREADY MAKING BIG TROUBLE FOR IRAQ BY SUPPORTING THE KURDISH INSURRECTION IN THIS COUNTRY. THE SHAH WOULD PROBABLY MOVE TO SQUASH THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT ENTIRELY EXCEPT FOR ONE FACTOR--THE RUSSIANS.

6. IRAQ HAS BASED ITS SECURITY ALMOST ENTIRELY ON SOVIET PROTECTION. THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE A MUTUAL SECURITY PACT. MOSCOW HAS GIVEN MISSILES, ADVANCED FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT TO THE IRAQI FORCES. A MOVE AGAINST BAGHDAD WOULD INVITE RUSSIAN RETALIATION.

7. BUT WHILE BASING ITS SECURITY ON SOVIET SUPPORT, THE IRAQIS HAVE BEEN PLAYING THE FIELD AS THEY MOVE TO DEVELOP THEIR VAST OIL RESERVES. A POLICY OF STRICT COMPETITIVE BIDDING HAS WORKED TO FAVOR THE WEST, NOT THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES.

8. THE BIGGEST PROJECT NOW UNDER WAY HERE IS A DEEP-WATER PORT BEING CONSTRUCTED OFF BASRA ON THE PERSIAN GULF BY BROWN & ROOT OF HOUSTON AND A WEST GERMANY CONCERN. THE NEXT BIGGEST IS AN EXPANSION OF OIL PRODUCTION IN RUMANIA BY A LARGELY WESTERN-OWNED OIL COMPANY.

9. THEN THERE IS A PROJECT TO BUILD A NEW NORTH-SOUTH PIPELINE WHICH COULD TAKE OIL EITHER TO THE PERSIAN GULF OR ACROSS SYRIA AND LEBANON TO THE MEDITERRANEAN. THAT JOB, WORTH \$350 MILLION, IS BEING HANDLED BY AN ITALIAN FIRM.

10. AS THE IRAQIS DEAL MORE AND MORE WITH WESTERN
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CONCERNS, THEY INCREASINGLY ASSERT DIPLOMATIC INDEPENDENCE FROM THE COMMUNIST BLOC. THUS THEY HAVE RECENTLY CLOSED THE RUSSIAN, CZECH AND EAST GERMAN CULTURAL CENTERS HERE IN BAGHDAD.

11. ALL OF THIS IS HANDWRITING ON THE WALL FOR THE RUSSIANS. THE FACT IS THAT THE POLICY MOSCOW DEVELOPED IN THE MIDEAST FOR A PERIOD OF HIGH TENSION DOES NOT PAY

IN A TIME OF EASING TENSION.

12. THE RUSSIANS, IN OTHER WORDS, HAVE AN INTEREST IN PUTTING THEIR PRESENCE IN THE MIDEAST ON SOMETHING MORE LEGITIMATE THAN A MILITARY FOOTING. THEY COULD DO JUST

THAT BY HELPING THE UNITED STATES WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT

OF THE ISRAELI-ARAB QUARREL.

13. AT PRESENT SOVIET DIPLOMACY IN IRAQ IS FAR MORE FAVORABLE TO A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARABS THAN THE LOCAL BAATH REGIME. TAREQ AZIZ, THE LEADING SPOKESMAN FOR THE REGIME HERE, SAYS FLATLY--AND IN A CRITICAL SPIRIT--THAT "RUSSIA IS FOLLOWING THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT LINE." MOHAMMAD AZIZ, THE LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER, ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND THE RULING BAATH PARTY IS THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE "MORE MODERATE" ON A SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL.

14. WITH THE RUSSIANS AND LOCAL COMMUNISTS PUSHING FOR A SETTLEMENT EVEN IN BAGHDAD WHERE IT IS UNPOPULAR, ANDREI GROMYKO CAN HARDLY DO LESS IN DAMASCUS. THUS THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER'S PRESENT MISSION CAN BEAR FRUIT.

15. THE MORE SO AS WASHINGTON HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM A SOVIET PEACE-MAKING ROLE IN THE MIDEAST. ON THE CONTRARY, ALL EXPERIENCE, AND ESPECIALLY EXPERIENCE HERE IN IRAQ, SHOWS THAT ONCE THE UNITED STATES ACCEPTS THE LEGITIMACY OF A RUSSIAN ROLE IN THE MIDEAST, IT BECOMES RELATIVELY EASY TO CIRCUMSCRIBE THE SOVIET ROLE. THE UNCLASSIFIED

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RUSSIANS, IN OTHER WORDS, CANNOT BE KEPT OUT OF THE MIDEAST, BUT ONCE ADMITTED THEY CAN BE TIGHTLY CONTAINED. RUSH

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